

The Hiroshima Kindergarten

UNDERCUTTING HEATHENDOM IN JAPAN

Talk about retrenchment in mission work; one had as well try to stay the winds! When funds become low it seems as if God thrusts something on us that must be done by faith. This, perhaps, is what keeps faith alive.

—Nannie B. Gaines.

Board of Missions, Methodist Episcopal
Church, South

Undercutting Heathendom

The Japan Mission of the M. E. Church, South, was opened in 1886, with Dr. W. R. Lambuth as Superintendent. The following year, to meet the urgent need for an educational institution for women, he opened a Girls' School in Hiroshima, an important military, naval, and educational center on the Japanese Inland Sea. Miss Nannie B. Gaines, of Florida, was placed in charge of the school, and with her at its head for twenty years it has grown from a small class of twenty pupils housed in a rough frame building on a narrow alley to a magnificent institution with over seven hundred students. A large and well-equipped main building was completed last year, and the Academic Department is thus well provided for.

The Kindergarten Department of the school was established in 1891, and in 1893 the Kindergarten Normal work was begun. Miss Gaines carried on this work in addition to her other cares as Principal until

Mrs. F. C. Macaulay took charge of it, in 1901. Mrs. Macaulay was succeeded in 1906 by Miss Margaret M. Cook, of Georgia. As Principal of the Kindergarten Department Miss Cook has general supervision of the three kindergartens conducted in connection with the school, and has charge also of the normal training work. She has seven associates in the training work, and each of the kindergartens is in charge of a graduate teacher assisted by the normal students.

There were enrolled in the three kindergartens for 1906-07 two hundred and twenty-five children. There are eight kindergartens in Japan in charge of graduates of the school, and others are opened as the new classes graduate each year. Of the 1907 class of eleven, one was a Chinese girl who goes back to pioneer kindergarten work in China. The regular work of the school is supplemented by Sunday school teaching, mothers' meetings, and visiting in the homes opened to them through the influence of the children. Thus the Kindergarten Department has a far-reaching and ever-widening sphere of influence.

But the quarters are badly overcrowded, and equipment such as should be provided is lacking. The laws of Japan are very exact in their specifications. For instance, one requirement is that so many cubic feet of air space in a room be allowed for each pupil. These laws must be measured up to in the smallest detail, or government recognition cannot be secured, however high the standard of work done. One too many pupils in a room means that the graduates go out without any official standing as teachers, handicapped in competition with teachers coming from the accredited Buddhist schools.

And the Buddhists are studying Christian methods and plans, and they are coming nearer and nearer to our standards of educational efficiency. With government recognition they have an immense advantage. The opportunities of our graduates are greatly limited, and great numbers are kept away through knowledge of these conditions.

If, then, this Southern Methodist school is to be the power for Christian education in Japan which it can be, it is imperative

that larger quarters and adequate equipment be provided for the Kindergarten Department. For this purpose the missionaries have long wished to secure a corner lot of the square on which the other buildings of the school stand. The owner, however, has repeatedly refused to sell at any price. When Bishop Wilson and the Secretary of the Board of Missions were in Japan in 1907, seeing the need, they authorized the missionaries to seize the first opportunity presented for the purchase of this lot. It was not until November, 1908, that the owner consented to its sale. The cost of this land and the buildings needed will be a little over \$15,000.

In 1907 Mr. W. T. Ellis, of the *Philadelphia Press*, made a tour of the world for the purpose of making an impartial investigation into the work of world-wide missions. The results of his investigations have been published the world over, and his word is recognized as high authority. In the following article he shows the unlimited admiration and appreciation which he has for the Hiroshima Girls' School and its work. At the same time he sets forth

clearly and forcibly the danger which we must provide against:

"A JOURNALIST'S 'IFS.'

"In the course of a round-the-world journey I have happened upon Hiroshima, knowing as little about it as the average American. Instead of a small seaside village and military barracks, I find a city of more than a hundred thousand inhabitants, and so thoroughly native that the appearance of a foreigner brings whole families to the doors to see the sight.

"Here I discovered a big institution for the education of girls—the largest mission girls' school in Japan, I am told—run by a little band of self-immuring Southern ladies. It is the only Christian institution in a teeming part of the empire, and it is a far-radiating lighthouse. I find in it priests' daughters, officials' daughters, daughters of remote rural homes, and children from every grade of Hiroshima household. I am not going to write about the school; those who know it more intimately can do that better than I. Still I cannot keep back some 'ifs' that are tugging at my pen.

"If I were a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, I should be mighty proud of this school and its teachers. In fact, I think I should do some tall bragging about it. To be in any sense a proprietor of such a widely ramifying work as this, which reaches out helping hands in a hundred directions, seems to me no small honor and privilege.

"If some few thousand Southern Methodists could stand, as I stood this morning, in the beautiful school chapel, before several hundred bright-faced Japanese girls, not to mention the cunning youngsters of the primary department, there would be an end of the dreary shutting of the doors in the face of opportunity by these devoted teachers; for that crowd spells evangelism. Wherever these pupils go—and they reach communities that no preacher can enter—they carry some measure of the good news of which this school is the incarnation.

"If I were a girl—a bright, brainy, attractive Southern girl—free to choose my lot in life and eager to count for something in the world, I would do considerable hard thinking before I would turn my back on

Japan's beckoning. Frankly, I cannot imagine any calling for a woman (except that of being a wife and mother) quite the equal of the one which offers here in the educational work of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Coming here does not mean going to live among savages on a barren island; the material hardships are practically none, and the compensations are innumerable. There are a dignity and a serenity about this sort of purposeful life, despite its toils, which whisper that perhaps selfless 'service is the secret of happiness.' Besides, it must be exhilarating to know that one's powers are counting in the making of a nation and of the world's big to-morrow. Here is a womanly niche worth while for the ambitious, talented young Christian; and let me whisper that I would rather be Miss Gaines, out here in Hiroshima, than be the most beautiful and favored belle in all the Southland of fair women.

"If I had money in my purse and the love of little children in my heart and even a mild interest in the kingdom of Him who was once a little child, I would pluck these

kindergartens out of their cramped old quarters, and establish them in a new, large, commodious, and up-to-date building so quickly that Miss Cook would think herself in a beautiful dream. For, you-see, I've watched these fetching little tots from utterly heathen homes kneeling reverently to say their morning prayer to Jesus, and singing the songs of the kingdom that are thus indelibly written on their memories, and learning the old, old story, the telling of which is the world's only way of ascent.

"A person with a glass eye could see that this sort of thing is undercutting heathendom in most strategic fashion. Even if it were only the making of the children happy, it would be worth while. Even to teach a couple of hundred of Japanese children to keep their noses clean means more than those who have never been in Japan can understand. If a little child of mine had gone to that beautiful city whose streets are full of boys and girls playing, and I wished to keep his or her memory fragrant in the lives of other little ones, I would covet the privilege of erecting a

memorial kindergarten at Hiroshima. Such a deed of ministry should certainly make one's pillow soft and sweet.

"Speaking of an appropriate memorial, if I were an influential member of a moderately prosperous Church which desired to honor the memory of a departed pastor or the anniversary of a living one, I would suggest an improvement on bronze tablets, expensively engraved resolutions, gilt-framed portraits, or plush rocking-chairs. In the new school building at Hiroshima are two beautifully planned and located reception rooms, where Japanese parents, friends, and officials get their first impressions of the Western religion; but these rooms are almost as bare as a barn. At the opening the resourceful principal sent around to the missionaries' homes and borrowed their parlor furniture for these rooms. Now, if the conditions I have suggested existed, I would get up in meeting and move that my Church pay honor to its pastor, show its world-wide outlook, and serve one of the manifold ministers of the outreaching gospel by furnishing one of those reception rooms or a science hall or a library as the fittest kind of a memorial.

"My final *if* is a big one, and nobody need read it except preachers and Church officers. *If* I lived in Nashville and knew the gentlemen in question, I would sit down for a long 'sodan' (as the Japanese call their constant conferences) with the gentlemen of all the Boards of Foreign Missions situated in that fair city. I would tell them some things I have learned in Japan about missionary work in general and educational work in particular. Right out in meeting I would speak concerning the imminent danger which confronts mission schools—the danger of deterioration. When they were first established, the mission schools led everything in Japan; but the government school system has advanced by leaps and bounds. To-day, Japanese educators tell me, the mission schools as a whole are below the level of others, from a purely educational standpoint. Some blunt Japanese have said that they should either rise up or give up.

"What is the matter? As usual, it is money. The mission schools do not pay large enough salaries to the native teachers to hold them in competition with the

government institutions. The mission schools do not, as a rule, have sufficient equipment. And so they are in danger, a danger which increased foresight and increased appropriations will speedily remove. The future of the Christian propaganda in Japan lies along educational lines; that much three months of first-hand investigation has shown me. The one greatest need of mission work lies in the teaching force and plan. More trained teachers of the kind already here, and better tools for them to work with, will result in a golden harvest for the cause of the Great Teacher."

